

## FLEET FOCUS

# USS Russell visits Hong Kong

By Lt. j.g. Greg. Neubecker

*USS Russell Public Affairs*

USS Russell (DDG 59) concluded a three-day port visit to Hong Kong, People's Republic of China, Feb. 12, as part of the first visit of a carrier battle group to "the Pearl of the Orient" since 1998. Russell's 278 crewmembers joined the John C. Stennis (CVN 74) Battle Group in enjoying the exotic splendors offered by Hong Kong. Highlighting this visit were the glittering light displays, which accompanied the celebration of Chinese New Year. This celebration welcomed in the year of the Golden Dragon and coincidentally, the dragon appears on Russell's crest and command ball cap and is a symbol of the original USS Russell's (DD 414) extensive service in the Far East operating areas.

For one Russell crewmember, returning to Hong Kong brought back memories of his engagement proposal to his wife at the China Fleet Club. Interior Communications Electrician 2nd Class Karl Spix of Pittsburgh, Penn., remarked, "I look forward to one day returning to Hong Kong for a second honeymoon."

Fire Controlman 3rd Class Scott Bouchard of Victorville, Calif., a trip to the vibrant city provided him a unique look at a different culture for his first time on deployment. The frantic fusion of colors, sounds, and scents led him to say, "there was a great deal of culture to take in. My eyes were opened to a whole new set of beliefs and way of life."

Whether Sailors were hopping between the densely packed restaurants of Lang Kwai Fon or scouring the narrow streets and alleys of Kowloon for discounted shopping opportunities, every Sailor enjoyed the excitement of Chinese culture.

Russell Sailors expressed their gratitude for Hong Kong's warm reception by donating their time and efforts to a community relation's project benefiting crossroads international, a charity organization dedicated to locating and redistributing relief goods to disaster areas around the globe.

Thirty-eight crewmembers spent a day assisting the organization in their relocation from an old warehouse to a new and larger



File photo

USS Russell (DDG 59) recently concluded a three-day port visit to Hong Kong, with the USS John C. Stennis (CVN 74) battle group. The ships were the first carrier battle group to visit the port since 1998.

headquarters at the old Kai Tek Airport. Volunteer Operations Specialist Second Class Robert Ponce of Lehigh Acres, Fla., exclaimed "I thought it was one of the best port visits I've had in a long time. To be able

to help someone in need is a wonderful way to spend time in a foreign port."

Hong Kong is a genuine blend of tradition and modernity, and Russell Sailors are all richer for the experience. As USS Russell

continues on her six-month deployment her crew looks forward to the remaining ports and to the prospect of one-day returning to the city of Hong Kong.

## USS Tucson hosts head chef from namesake

By Lt j.g. C.M. Urban

*USS Tucson Public Affairs*

A Sailor stands six hours of watch, participates in another six hours of grueling weapons movement, attends training for several hours, and finds himself about three hours from starting the cycle all over again. Its been a long submarine day onboard USS Tucson (SSN 770), but its finally over, and as Machinist's Mate Fireman Monte Mishoe takes a deep breath, three hours from starting all over again, only one thing can bring a smile to his face...Chef Martin's cooking.

What about sleep? "No way," says Mishoe, "I don't want to take the chance that I'll sleep through Chef Martin's midnight rations (midrats). I heard he's got something special planned."

Something special indeed. Sleep is a precious commodity onboard a submarine, so to find a young Sailor actively avoiding "the rack" pointed to either the early onset of some mental instability or a truly unique experience. In this case, thankfully, it was the latter. Mishoe was referring to Chef Martin Fontes, head chef at the "El Charro Cafe," a renowned Mexican restaurant located in Tucson, Ariz. True to life in every detail, from the big floppy white chef's hat to the jolly, rotund physique that every purveyor of fine cuisine should possess, Chef Martin had been riding Tucson for the past two days, making every meal something special.

Tucson was commissioned in 1995, and the close relationship that has been cultivated between Tucson, Ariz. and her namesake submarine is due in large part to the unique bond that exists between the "El Charro Cafe" in Tucson and the "El Charro DownUnder," the galley onboard Tucson. When the boat's Commanding Officer D.J. Murphy took a small contingent of crewmembers to Tucson in October 1999 for a visit, the relationship between ship and restaurant flourished once again.

The "El Charro," run by original ship sponsors Ray and Carlotta Flores, threw a party for the crew. It was at this party that the idea of Chef Martin (Ray and Carlotta's nephew) cooking onboard the submarine was hatched. One of the crewmembers that Murphy had brought along to Tucson was Mess Management Specialist 1st Class Bryron Blackmon, the leading Mess Specialist onboard the boat. He had spent an entire day with Chef Martin in the kitchen of the "El Charro", learning the art of cooking authentic Mexican cuisine from scratch. Everyone involved in the Tucson visit thought the perfect way to return the hospitality would be for Chef Martin to come see how the kitchen works for a few days. Tucson's Eastern Pacific deployment in early 2000, including stops in Victoria, Canada and San Diego, California proved the perfect opportunity



USS Tucson photo

Chef Martin leads MS3 Justin Gay through the preparation of an authentic Mexican meal.

for Chef Martin to wow the entire crew with his culinary expertise.

"I couldn't wait. I've been looking forward to this trip for three months" said Flores, who had met the boat in Victoria and would embark for the three-day transit to San Diego.

It became clear after Martin's first meal that the crew recognized a difference in the galley. Crewmembers who blearily stumbled towards crew's mess for the midnight or morning meal were greeted by lines of shipmates just as long as for lunch and dinner. "Typically we have 30 or so guys who eat mid-rats. But with Martin cooking, we have somewhere around 80 every night. He's a great cook but he's killing my budget," laughed Supply Officer Lt. Rich Paquette.

The crew was treated to everything from salsa made from scratch to Mexican lasagna to the hands down favorite- spicy eggs infused with generous portions of "El Charro's" signature "carne seca" beef. Meal comment cards stuffed the supply officer's e-mailbox.

Quotes from various crewmembers called Martin "the best thing for crew morale since five-section duty," "awesome," and "better than mom's cooking." Chef Martin happily listened to all of the praise, claiming that by the time he left, the "El Charro DownUnder" would be "the best galley in the entire submarine force."

More importantly, Chef Martin's embark was as exciting for him as it was for the crew. With the exception of the bed, which is simply "not made for the comfort of a big man," according to Martin, he enjoyed every minute of his time onboard. He became a regular in control, ostensibly learning as much as he could about driving the sub, but really just listening for Sonar to call out the detection of "biologics."

"That's my favorite part," said Martin, "getting

to listen to the dolphins and shrimp." Conversations were routinely cut short as Martin sprinted to the sonar room to listen intently. Another part of the trip that impressed Chef Martin was field day cleaning, which he called, "one of the greatest ideas I've ever seen." Perhaps unfortunately for his employees in Tucson, Martin only half joked that he wanted to institute field day at the "El Charro", making it "the USS El Charro Cafe for a day."

The most surprising part of the submarine for Chef Martin was something rarely cited by a visitor- the excellence of the ship's galley and its equipment. "That kitchen is one of the best equipped that I have ever seen" said Flores. He gave high praise to whoever designed the galley, saying that they "must have consulted a chef, because that kitchen can do anything."

"Every meal that comes out of there should taste like I cooked it," he added, garnering more than a few dubious looks from those in earshot.

"I'd come back anytime, just to cook and hang-out with these guys," said Chef Martin. "It will be sad to go." Perhaps it will be sad for Martin when he says his good-byes to the ship, but not nearly as sad as for the crew. "No offense to the cooks onboard, but I'm really going to miss that guy," said Mishoe. "I guess after he leaves I'll just go to sleep and make believe that he's cooking for us again."

Either way, Blackmon remains firmly convinced that Chef Martin's instruction will have quite an impact on galley food preparation, especially on Mexican night. In the end, the Captain may have opened quite a can of worms, however. The crew has already latched onto the visiting chef idea and is reportedly planning to propose a "visiting chefs of the world" program. Nice try guys.

## Yeoman Chief Petty Officer Barbara J. Reece Transfers to the Fleet Reserves

By LTJG Michael H. Sanders/YN3 Peggy A. Jackson

*VP-47*

On Feb 2, 2000, in a traditional naval ceremony held at the Marine Corps Base Hawaii, Kaneohe Bay, Chief Yeoman Barbara J. Reece transferred to the Fleet Reserves after 20 years of active duty. Chief Petty Officer Reece enlisted in the United States Navy on April 1, 1980. She reported to Recruit Training Command, Orlando, Florida, where she received basic training. After her training she transferred to Yeoman "A" school. Then proceeded to her first command, Navy Recruiting District, San Diego. On Dec. 16, 1982, she was advanced to Petty Officer 3rd Class.

Reece continued to excel and advance in her job field, and was then transferred to Fleet Activities, Okinawa, Japan. Her next command was Commander Naval Surface Group, Pacific in San Diego. She was selected as the staff Sailor of the Year and received the Navy League, Woman Of the Year award. She then transferred back to San Diego to Explosive Ordnance Disposal Mobile Unit Three. While at her next command, Central Command, Macdill Air Force Base in Tampa, FL., she was selected and advanced to Chief Petty Officer on Dec. 16, 1994. Finally, she arrived at Patrol Squadron Forty-Seven as the administration leading chief petty officer. Reece completed two deployments to Misawa, Japan, and Diego Garcia.

Reece was awarded her second Navy and Marine Corps Commendation Medal at her ceremony for meritorious service while serving as the Administration Department Leading Chief Petty Officer, Patrol Squadron Forty-Seven. She also received a certificate of appreciation from the Commander-in-Chief for her honorable service in the Armed Forces.